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- **STORIES BY**

  DOROTHY LIVESAY, HUGH GARNER AND GEORGE LANNING

- **POEMS BY**

  ANNE WILKINSON AND LOUIS DUDEK

- **REVIEWS BY**

  ROBERT WEAVER, BELLE POMER AND OTHERS

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Continuing *THE CANADIAN REVIEW OF MUSIC AND ART, PREVIEW* and *FIRST STATEMENT.*

The Last Climb

Dorothy Livesay

They were on their way: whirring down the curving road through an early morning mist, flashing and diving into cool green pockets, soaring up a small rise towards blue air. The bicycle handlebars were wings; on a straight stretch they could be released, and the arms outspread. Then the body itself steered, controlled the machine, resisted each small shock. Hand in hand they could race downwards, breathless and laughing into the silent morning.

"See, mon amie, there's no one else in the world!" Paul cried out to her. Only a few birds started up in a whirr of denial to answer him. In the farms below, between the yellowed stone and the dark cypresses of the Midi, there was not a human gesture.

She felt as if she had come out of some great danger, and now knew the full impact of life coursing through her bones. Even when they began pushing uphill there was no exertion in it. Inexhaustible funds of breath were yours. She kept on laughing for no reason, head flung back and fanned by the cool air.

Finally Paul slowed down at an isolated farmhouse, its crumbling walls mended with lichen. "We will ask permission to leave our wheels here" he said, dismounting. They leaned the bicycles against the wall and Paul went around behind the haystack to find the *fermier.* She waited in the sunny air, taking deep breaths. He returned, whistling.

"Is it all right?"

"Bien sur. Look, sling your lunch over your back, like this. And here is your stick."

They set out, almost shyly, on foot. There was something more intimate about walking. Ahead of them, seemingly as far off as ever, were the blue sloping sides of the mountain, Sainte Victoire topped by the cross. Then the road lost itself in pine forest, curving and strewn with needles, feeling its way up through the trees' shadow. The air grew sticky, almost too sweet.

"I haven't been here for a long time," Paul explained, "but I know the path well. When I was little we would come here looking for eagles' nests — but we never found any. Once we got lost in one

of the grottos at the top, and couldn't get out for hours."

"Were those the caves where the people hid, when fighting the Saracens?"

"All down the mountainside are caves. Easy to be lost in them."

"But how can a mountain lose you? There is always the way down." Paul smiled at her ignorance. "You may come to an impasse; then you turn around to go back and the ledge is too high to climb back upon . . . There are stories that people have starved to death up here. And only a little while ago a boy got killed, trapped by a fallen rock . . . Sainte Victoire looks gentle from a distance. It's a sphinx, nevertheless, with claws."

"I can't believe that yet," Marian smiled. The air was so serene. Over the slithery bed of pines they passed soundlessly, occasionally startling a thrush from his song. The gloom thickened and it was hotter climbing.

"Surely I don't need to carry this sweater, Paul?" She had it slung over back, with the lunch.

"Yes, you'll need it," he insisted. "But I'll carry it."

"No." That was the last thing she would do, give him the opportunity to consider her the weaker. He was to know her as a comrade on this last trip.

"As you like." If his black eyes were laughing they did not show it. She caught a glimpse of his look, warm and challenging; then turned her attention to the path. It was steeper now and they had to scramble from root to root, careful of balance. Below lay a solid bank of trees and there seemed no ending to their upward reach. Marian kept close to Paul, glad to have that contact. Alone, she would have felt smothered in this dusty wood.

Where the trees began to thin out, Paul cried: "Hola!" His cry rang ahead of them, speeding into the emptiness of white gravel and boulder. Suddenly, they could breath air again, air all about them. With the last tree behind, they sat down for a moment amid the greyish expance of rock and moss. Not a hard, unyielding rock such as she was used to at home in Ontario; but soft, ribbed with light specks, constantly shifting like rain. Here the sun was around them. pale but friendly; and the sky hazy. They sat close together, darting their eyes about like birds. A faint, sweet scent loaded the air.

"What's that?" she sniffed. "It's good." He jumped up and darted away for a moment. When he returned his hands were filled with blue. "Eh bien, smell."

"Violets!" She put her nose into them, then he scattered them over her face and hair. "But Paul, I want to keep them!"

"No. They'll wither on the way up. And I'll show you more and more. Come along!" His voice was urgent. She felt herself yielding already the comrade role, accepting his will wherever he would go.

Now their feet were scratching on the white gravel, they were scrambling over boulders and almost losing the path, so narrow had it become. The way was lined with the crisp curls of hyacinths, mauve and yellow, and all kinds of narcissi. She would pause to exclaim over them and look up to find him far ahead, swinging his stick, leaping from rock to rock. Then she had to rush to catch up, enjoying the free, heavily scented air, but feeling the sun hotter and hotter on her face. When she reached him, with narcissi sticking out of her than a perpendicular indentation. Here Paul paused to make a judicious pockets he had to tease: "Still incorrigibly romantic — aren't you, girl?"

"But Paul! When you've never been used to flowers like this! You can't imagine what it's like. Why Paul . . . " Her voice was singing. "I can forget everything — even my going away isn't real any more. This is real. This is what matters." And she stooped, and buried her head in a mass of purple.

"Yes." His gentle smile had returned. "I can forget everything too — for just now." She stood below him and his hand sped over her hair in a quick motion. Her scalp tingled, more than if wind had brushed it. They stood still, as if encircled. A hawk cried, darting down towards the forest.

"Come." This time it was she who said it.

The way ahead was harder, with the path sometimes no more circuit, sped around endless piles of rock and dead tree trunks, ferreted out a route. Once he found foothold in what seemed sheer rock, digging his toes into ledges, his hands in loose roots. Midway he swung there, then hoisted his body in one movement to the top. She had a sickening fear that he would fall, and that unnerved her. "How can I do that?" she called.

"Come up half way, your hands in those roots . . . That's it. There." She pressed herself against the rock, straining so that her face was scratched, stretching foot above foot. She dared not look downwards.

"Now, stretch out your stick. Hold the curved end, pass me the other. Now, I have it." Then her foot slipped, and she was clinging only with one hand to the root and with the other to her cane. Her

left arm, where Paul was pulling, seemed to be coming out of its socket.

"Hold on. Don't lose your head. Find a place, push with the soles of your feet." She found it, bent herself double, and climbed like a fly with her two hands grasping the stick. Then his strong hand seized hers, his hand like an anchor swung her to safety.

"Whew. I'm no mountain goat." She laughed to hide her trembling. But his firm hand, still holding hers, banished her fears. She felt herself surrendering completely to his strength; and yet with nothing lost, feeling more free herself. They laughed at each other, happy.

"Now, the last lap."

It proved to be easy going. The slope was gentler, but the light more harsh. The blue sky was now a sultry colour and a wind like the cold nose of a dog came blowing out of nowhere. They ploughed on slowly, getting back their breath. And the mountain, which had always seemed to tower to a peak, was spreading out before her into a long table. On one of its highest crags the enormous cross was planted, a memorial to the long-ago victory over the Saracens.

Now they are plodding slowly towards it, adjusting their breath to the raw dry air. The wind was icy, nipping through their clothes, and Marian was glad now she had a sweater to put on. Her eyes were trained on the summit, she did not dare look downwards. The light was queerly false, as if they were above the sun. Her head seemed filled with the bizarre light, the blank barrenness of rock; so when they reached the foot of the cross and she looked up, it swayed dizzily above her.

"Eh, voila" said Paul. "There, we're on top of the world. It must have taken years to haul up the wood for that cross. The hermits who lived here put their lives into it . . . A far cry from the way we live! Come and look down at our punyness!" He led her across the rough flatness of the rock along a path to the ledge.

She saw not so much a distance of space, as of time. The tiny dotted valleys were aeons away, the people who must be moving there, were pre-historic. Everything she had just begun to think was real — this France, half adopted — had vanished. Even Paul beside her was a ghost, and she was a mote of dust. The rock could not hold their footprints, and what it knew was not known to them. Nothing was known in this remoteness; living and breathing did not matter. Her very consciousness was stilled, and looking down over the brink

she felt absolutely inert, frozen. Then, staring far below at the cliffs and crags, fear snapped down on her like a trap.

She sprang back, her head suddenly conscious with pain, reeling with dizziness. Forgetting Paul, forgetting the abyss, she stumbled blindly back to the foot of the cross. There the belching overtook her and she was all body; her throat was torn sore from the sour vomit. She lay down upon the ground.

Now with everything quiet again she heard his footsteps, quick and firm. "Marianne, Marianne, qu'est ce que tu as?" He was kneeling beside her.

"Ce n'est rien." She was smiling weakly. "Mon estomac."

He began fussing with something, undoing a parcel. Then a cork popped and he was mopping her forehead with his handkerchief, soaked in wine. Her skin tightened, but the pain in her head was relaxed a little. He made her suck a little wine from the bottle: "Because there is no water." Then he placed her head on his arm and kept her lying there beside him.

"I'm all right now."

"No, you're not."

"Silly, it was just a moment of weakness. It's all over."

"Silly yourself! You can't see your white face . . . I'm sorry, Marianne" he whispered in French.

"It's nothing . . . It was the strangeness . . . "

"You see what I said about Sainte Victoire."

"Yes. I understand the mountain" She smiled. "But already," she told him, "I feel more — *human*." She lifted her head to prove it, and his arm supported her.

"Oh it was my fault — I shouldn't have hurried you." He bent low.

"Marianne?"

"Oui?"

Trembling a little, she turned her face towards him. She forgot all her resolutions about comradeship, being sure now that the only ease between them could be this one, where he thrust the hair back from her face and drew her close. Their lips and bodies met; there was no more barrier. Above them the huge shadow of the cross fell obliquely, a shelter from the tremendous sky.

After a time they got up and stood apart, facing each other, not having any words. Then Marian ran a little ahead of him, to find a place for their lunch.

They ate happily, not minding the wind any more, or the great slopes falling away on either side. Paul cut the bread and she covered it with butter and camembert. After the wine they sat blinking sleepily at each other.

"Now I do feel it in my legs — the climb she told him, stretching herself, and then curling up in a little hollow. He sat above her, stroking her hair. "Now are you afraid of this place?"

"No. It gives me a view of things. It seems like forever and forever." His eyes looked away, pensive; but he was still with her, in harmony with her. She dozed a little, hoping she would never have to stir again; simply believing.

But Paul must have become restless. After a while he stirred, fumbled in his breast pocket. She opened her eyes to see his watch dangling above her.

"Four o'clock! Already! Oh, Paul."

"Yes, we must begin the descent". His voice sounded brisk, normal, as if already broken off from the mountain's peak and rilling downwards, his voice bouncing downwards like a pebble. "Eh bien, Allons!"

When they were ready to leave, and she was stuffing the lunch paper under a rock, she began shivering again. For she had to stand and look fearlessly all down the way they had climbed; and be ready to face it, knowing she was leaving something behind.

"What is it?" He seemed disturbed too, his mouth uncertain.

"Nothing." The wind pressed against her, blowing her hair back. So he could not help himself, but took her a second time in his arms. Her head was buried and they swayed there, braced against the wind. It seemed almost roughly that he swung apart and started on down the hill.

It was down and down, sometimes so fast she could hardly stop herself. Then before she knew it she had to jump into a chasm, falling on her knees, scrambling again to her feet. He was going so fast! Sometimes where the path was a steep slope she would be sliding down it, crouching on her heels, hearing the dislodged pebbles rattling far below. It was down and down, through the dustyness and barren white-flecked rock. It was down and down, till her legs were trembling so she could hardly stand up straight.

"Paul. I'm going to sit down a minute."

"All right. Sorry." He paused, then came back slowly to sit beside her. "Just wobbly?" His voice was gentle; but she felt his

aloofness. He had gone a long way past her, down and down.

When they reached the forest it was like entering an oven. Sticky heat smacked their faces, sealed up their nostrils. They did no more jumping, but slipped slowly down upon the needles. She felt smothered and far away from him. He was only someone accompanying her through a forest. "I'll show you the way out" he seemed to be saying, politely.

The way did clear, and she stood at the bottom in greenness, breathing cooler air. The sun lay like flat gold on the hills opposite. They paused a moment, listening to the human sounds from the farms, a cock crowing. Then they went for their bicycles.

Slowly they rode home, not talking. She felt too forsaken to try and breach any gap, force any words. Paul pressed along beside her, head down. In a moment, and a moment only, they would be at the villa wall. She would be leaving him there.

He dismounted from his bicycle and leaned over the handle-bars. "When are you going away?" The question between them!

"Next week". It was almost a whisper.

"You can't stay longer, Marianne?"

"I have no more money! I have to go home and get a job."

"Yes. And I too, Marianne. It's the same with me." He half smiled, ironic. Then seeing her face his own grew quiet.

"Au revoir. I'll see you before you go."

They shook hands.

"Au revoir," she said.

ANNE WILKINSON

Two Poems

EASTER SKETCHES, MONTREAL

1

South of North
Men grow soft with summer,
Lack the winter muscle
Set to tauten at the miracle:
Boom and shrapnel, riot
Of Easter, loud
Where guns of ice salute
The cracking God.

Vision dims where flowers
Blur the lens
But here, intemperate
The ropes of air
Whip the optic nerve, instil
A hardihood of sight
That snaps the melting hour
When flocks of snow stampede
And skip the hill, dousing
The rocks with intimations
Of fertility.

South of North
Men grow deaf with summer;
Sound is muffled
By the pile of lawns;
But where the air is seeded fresh
From skies that stretch their cloudy loins
At the back of the long north wind
The ear is royal pitched
And hears the dying snows
Sing like swans.

2

Where campanile of rock steeples the town
Water bells the buoy of all our birthdays;
Rivers swell in tumbling towers of praise,
Ice in aqua risen hails
The bearing down in labour of the sun;

And after sun, guards of northern lights
Stand their swords;
Green, their cosmic fire kindled
By the green shoots in our wood
They cut the natal cord

Freeing the animal sensuous man with astral
Spears of grass;
Cerebral ore conceives when pollen
Falls from heaven in a buzz of stars
And space is lit by multitudes of time

And time and the wheeling world
Fold the birthday children in their arms.

THE SWIMMING LESSON

He found her
Tied with ropes of kelp
In shallow water.
A Good Seamaritan, he beached
His body, knelt and cut
The weeds that bound her to an arc
About the land's tail end of rock

Then seaward over the swell
He climbed the daisy cliffs of spray
But braked his fins and turned
When she called blue on the wind,
"You leave me free to drown

For I can only swim
In shades of shallow water".

He listened, drifting
While she told a tyrant's tale
Of how, step-motherly with threat
Of octopus and squid,
She'd schooled one slavish toe
To tickle pebbles
Tethered by the tide
To levels close to shore.
"I float in home-eroded caves", she sighed,
"My faint head weak
Above the horseplay, O the high-capped
White effrontery of waves !"

His scepticism stared,
"Everyone can swim", he said,
"After the age of seven —
Why, children wet with birth
Remember to their dying dust
The lost aquarium of Eden".

"Not if they were ding dong bell
Full fathom dark in the well
When they were weaned", she answered him,
"My lungs are full, I choke
On memory of water ;
I live by shallow seas
Where I can hear the landlubber
Dig the rib and soil of laughter".

"Earthbound Dunce", he snapped,
Then, looking at his watch,
"I think there's time",
And there on rock, in merman's sense,
Became her master
(He was dyed a teacher — not in wool
But bright in silk and nylon
To his diver's soul).

"Come", he said, "I'll teach you to swim
With all four fins,
I'll teach you to duck your head;
I'll open your eyes to fish and flora
And your own green notion
Planting rosemary and thyme
In acres red with herring
Under a sky of ocean".

And though she did not holy believe,
She'd lost the hellfire of her disbelief
And moved, a sleeping swimmer
As he steered her out to where the sea
Rolled bass with whales
And there were no more walls

(Awash and knots away
The breakers whinnied on the sands
And fields of moon ripe seawheat,
Fed by currents in her blood, swayed
To the tug and slack of Polar streams
On the warm gulf seam of love).

The gentle teacher held her under the chin
And he held her up behind
By a small white flap of frightened skin.
On the seventh day from land
He whispered through a crevice in the roar
"I will let you go and we will swim
In fathoms deeper than the need for breath",
And she, accepting, drowned and swam
And happily lived ever waterward.

Music

Chester Duncan

NEW CANADIAN MUSIC

II

If you want to find out how poor a composer you are, your string quartet will tell you immediately, and your choral number will tell you almost immediately. Hokum and decorated blarney blush on the printed page, and writing for "effects" is shown up for the shoddy business it is. In contemporary Canadian composition, choral music is in an interesting formative stage, and the gap between the competently staid and the incompetently enterprising is even wider than in the other mediums. Here follow some notes on recent works — mainly choral — published by BMI and Western Music, Ltd.

1. Healey Willan

In listening to the music of Healey Willan, one wishes often to use words like *sincere, workmanlike, impressive;* but the simple word *good* pathetically sticks in the throat. Pathetically, because Dr. Willan seems at times to have all the qualities of a good composer except talent — that little thing which is no good by itself, which is so often abused, but which is so annoyingly necessary. *On May Morning,* a chorus for womens' voices (BMI—1950), illustrates, like so many of his compositions, this sad mediocrity. Everything is competently in place, but everything, including the harmony and the accompaniment, is somehow "flat" and "depressed" — so different from the tradition-laden lightness of John Milton, whose words are here set.

On the other hand, the *Three Christmas Carols* (BMI—1949) have real vitality, especially the first one, "The Twelve Days of Christmas", which is just an arrangement of the traditional song, but such a bright and amusing one that I am tempted to suggest that arrangement is just the field for a composer with Dr. Willan's virtues and limitations. His liturgical music, of course, has an integrity of its own. One hardly thinks of it separately as music at all, but as part of the services that this composer knows so well. In his series of *Introits,* for Festival and General use (Western Music—1950), Dr. Willan

has set down, with quiet naturalness, without fanfare, the spare little notes that the words will elevate.

2. Joseph Roff

The Snare (BMI—1950) would be perfect for the Leslie Bell Singers if it were set for female voices, if you know what I mean. Here, I think, is the worst kind of mixed voice choral music — full of sentimental "effects" made all the worse by the composer's cleverness. The words (by James Stephens, no less) are in poor taste, and the music goes several steps further in unabashed hokum. Genesis — bad Elgar out of worse Scriabin.

If the basic harmony of *The Snare* is that of a slightly improved gospel hymn, *Easter Anthem,* for mixed chorus (BMI—1950), is quite four-square. Despite the words (St. John of Damascene), the general effect is puritanical rather than purist. However, there is a soprano (or tenor) solo in the middle which reveals a quiet lyrical gift. This gift is again apparent in the middle section of the solo song *The Greatest Gift* (BMI—1949), and in its fine opening phrase ("All the breath and the bloom of the year"). In fact, this song is a good piece of work, although at the end the words finally drag it down. And no wonder, for Robert Browning claims here that "all [truth and trust] were for me in the kiss of one girl." Well, truth will out.

3. William Keith Rogers

This young composer shows great promise, for his natural talent is allied to a sound and interesting technique. His *Three Songs From Emily Dickinson,* for mixed voices (BMI—1948), are simple in intonation, but the music falls naturally into place as the words give their lonely, impersonal little messages. Prosodically, these pieces couldn't be better. The choral medium is handled with easy competence, and, in the second song ("I like to see it lap the miles"), with a great deal more than competence. I do hope that choral societies know about these.

4. Alan Thompson

Mr. Thompson is a very dangerous composer. Some of the time his music is simple and harmless, but most of the time it gesticulates and weeps in the most alarming way. *In the Still Night,* an anthem for mixed voices (BMI—1948), is full of heavy-breathing pauses and unnecessary breaths, but its total impression is "not bad." *This Human Way* (BMI—1948), on the other hand, has some very interesting

sections, but nearly all of these seem to come from other composers. The first phrase of the piece is virtually the sames as the opening phrase of Roger Quilter's famous *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal.* Mr. Thompson will have to watch this, for his latest solo song *Night* (BMI—1951) has only one lovely bit — on the first page — but it's straight out of Grieg. *Night* and *Prayer for Easter Day* (BMI—1948) and *Reverie of a Soldier* (BMI—1947) are called "Standard Canadian Songs", but one might well ask, whose standard? *Prayer for Easter Day,* despite a well-designed accompaniment, is as good as Malotte, but unfortunately no better. It's the same sort of rhetorical thing. *Reverie of a Soldier* would only pass at a regimental gathering, at a time when the boys and girls were in a very sentimental mood indeed. Similarly, *The Oxen* (BMI—1949), a setting of Hardy's poem, would be very popular at Pop concerts and Lodge meetings, where Hardy would not. In *Where He Sleeps* (BMI—1948), another solo song, Mr. Thompson shows that he has a simple, small talent which he can respect. It is sentimental and nice; but it is far too easy for this composer to be sentimental and horrid.

5. Bernard Naylor

Bernard Naylor is an English musician who lived for some years in Canada. His work in this country, partly by his fault and mostly by ours, was largely unappreciated. Latterly he had turned to composition, and the *Three Motets* for mixed voices (Western Music—1950) are startling proof that he was right, and that he was one of the best composers ever to live in Canada. Indeed, the critic is tempted to say that these pieces make most of our younger composers look sick with pretention, ignorance, vulgarity, or snobbery. All one really has to say is that here is adult music, traditional, difficult, and immensely effective. In one stroke Western Music, Ltd. has made up for too much prudence and too much femininity.

6. Miscellaneous

Wedding Hymn, for medium voice (BMI—1951), is a new transcription, by Walter MacNutt, of an aria from Handel's *Ptolemy,* now with English (presumably entirely new) words. Arthur Somervell's very well known transcription of the same piece (*Silent Worship*) is not nearly as good or as smooth as Mr. MacNutt's, but it may be difficult to get used to the new words, which are religious in character.

Oh My Wild Rose, for medium voice, by Bayard Haddock

(BMI—1951), is another "standard" song. Its piano introduction makes you expect the worst, and the expectation is completely fulfilled. The awful words are admirably joined to the awful music.

Jean Papineau-Couture has a difficult talent to estimate, but a talent he certainly has. His latest piece, *Rondo* (BMI—1951), is a case in point. Its austerity makes the music sound thin at first, but the total impression is one of ingenuity and constant musicality. The trouble is that one has virtually to learn the piece before one can judge it. I think that there are possibilities that the composer draws back from, yet as a glittering, pianistic essay, this rondo is very much worthwhile, even more so than his *Mouvement Perpétuel* (BMI—1949).

Quadrilha Brasileira, for piano (BMI—1951), by one of Canada's best composers, Claude Champagne, was written in 1942 at the request of the Canadian Ambassador to Brazil. It is neither good nor bad music, the kind of thing that might be effective at stirring encore time. But played apart from everything else, it sounds just like an official pot-boiler — that is, not sufficiently on the boil.

Aunt Sarna

George Lanning

The clear saffron evening light reached only tentatively into the room. The visitors from across the Lake, standing loosely around the old woman in the chair, loomed up into an upper darkness that was like the twilight that floats imprisoned in a crystal. The visitors seemed gigantic, overwhelming, out of proportion to the creature in the chair and to the small room: figures, larger than life as she knew it, removed here from some other time, some harsher sphere. She was quite extinguished by them, a candle gutted. The saffron light trailed onto the floor, succumbing as it touched her chair.

She was very small; she was ninety; she might be more.

"Mother won't let us talk about her age," said Eunice.

The visitors nodded, smiled. This was a fiction, not even very polite. Mother was past caring, they thought; mother was not sensitive, mother was insensible. Indeed, was not their pilgrimage to this Canadian house — for "pilgrimage" was the occurred word — seen by them as the dispensation of a sacrament: the extreme unction of their approval that she had upheld until now what, in a comfortable platitude, they called a way of life, which now, with her, might be seen to be dying?

But they said, as they had said on their last visit two years ago, "How are you, Aunt Sarna?" And, to Eunice: "She looks well."

Eunice frowned and made the slightest of negative motions with her head. "Oh, mother's feeling grand."

Mother stirred, shifting her hands beneath the quilt that lay across her lap. Mother spoke, but indistinctly. They did not understand. Eunice bent over the chair and rearranged the covering, and the saffron light gathered its fragile strength and leapt from the room. In the sudden night Eunice turned and pulled the chain on the floorlamp beside the old woman's chair.

"The evenings are so long," she murmured. "You hardly need a light. Right to bed when it's dark. The chickens aren't shut in," she

said. She brought ashtrays, adjusted chairs. "I won't be a minute."

She went out through the screen door, shutting them in the shabby farmhouse parlour. The women settled on the twin black leather couches (which they rode precariously, like inexpert horsemen); the men scattered to the painted wooden rockers. They heard Eunice in the yard, shooing the chickens into the roost. The old woman's lips moved, and one of the men leaned toward her. "That's right, Aunt Sarna."

Aunt Sarna appeared unconscious of her audience; blunt, inexorable, her ignorance struck them down. They were silent.

The floor lamp shed a meagre light that lapped across their knees, glanced down the bevel of a diamond, slid along a fingernail, fled through the humped-up crystal of a watch. The light dropped straight on the quilt, a white quilt with brilliant hoops of green and yellow and pink: double wedding ring. The hoops welded the quilt together, welded the old woman motionless into her chair. The visitors had become spectators at a pantomime in which the actress had forgot her gestures. It was distressing. And those hoops: they were quivering with life, coiling and writhing as the hands moved directionless beneath them. The quilt was frayed, and some of the squares had split. "It was on their bed," Eunice had explained. "She don't want any other. I guess it makes her feel closer to pa."

The quilt slipped, slid, had to be put back; and the memory of the man who had lain under it at her side — had the memory slipped, too? The visitors looked, and waited.

Eunice came back. "Well, mother," she shouted, "did you have a nice visit with the folks?"

The coils lurched, struck, subsided at Aunt Sarna's feet.

"Slippery as an eel," said Eunice irritably. (The visitors knew she meant the quilt.)

"That's a pretty dress," said one of the women.

(Aunt Sarna muttered; her hands moved questing along her thighs with a terrible, aimless intensity.)

Eunice nodded. "Pa always liked her in purple. She wears her purple every Sunday." She tucked her mother in again. "Pa always liked you in purple," she said.

The women talked about their last visit. "Two years," said Eunice. "It seems . . ." She frowned. She hesitated. "It seems . . ." she

said, not knowing how, after all, it had seemed. "I guess I measure time by mother."

She spoke, they thought, from within an hallucination which, over a, for her, measureless period, had cocooned her senses, walled them up, and her sensibility. She seemed to them a prisoner of her hallucination, and her mother, too, it might be. Like twin occupants of a snowstorm ball they stood weightless in quiescent water, the snow crystals quite still, too, beneath their feet, which anyhow had been unperturbed by the as yet unthought of depthlessness. The walls of this once-imposed, and, at some later date, imposing hallucination rendered their world soundless, airless, timeless, lit here and again by saffron light that dispelled no dark, but struck only glissading hoops of color in the twilit water.

Now, as Eunice spoke, the ball shook; the visitors plucked it, trembled it, examined, tilted it, and time entered through some smallest crack. Snow eddied, bringing false light, rose, engulfed, would settle again, yes, but the bottom would be not shallow. Down the two might sink, the hallucinatory world closing traplike, their weightlessness turning to clay, into the smothering snow. Or, after all, was the hallucination now imposing only?

The visitors suggested that two years was perhaps a long time, and Eunice, finding once again some bearing, agreed that things had changed. Two years ago mother had been spry as ever, and quick. They all laughed when one of the visitors spoke of how the old lady'd carried on with a great-nephew. (He'd come and sat beside her. She'd snapped: "Young man, you keep your hands to yourself.")

Eunice smiled wearily. "Mother likes a good joke." They thought the present indicative was another fiction.

But how that quilt shifted! It would survive them all, having served not only Sarna and her husband but the men and women who had for generations earlier perpetuated the house. It was signed and dated, worth, the women thought, a good deal, though it was thready in spots, and stained. Antique dealers . . . Well, I might, Eunice conceded, looking at it speculatively, after mother . . .

But mother, the visitors agreed, had gone already; somewhere. They rose. The women kissed Eunice; kissed Aunt Sarna. The quilt rustled, glided away, and Aunt Sarna looked up. In the light her eyes glittered.

The visitors bustled out the door, noisy and patronizing. "You

must get over, Eunice," and, more softly, as if there were need for respect, since there was none for discretion, "when you can."

The quilt lay in a heap on the floor. Eunice, out by the car, was hurrying them off. In the quiet room the old woman reached out — toward the lamp? toward the voices in the rimming night? Her hand trembled blindly on the arm of the chair, dropped through space, grasped the chain.

The light went out.

Film

Belle Pomer

THE BROWNING VERSION

Terence Rattigan's play, *The Browning Version,* has been adapted into a film which is exceptional in its virtues and at least interesting in its shortcomings. The action covers the last two days of a Classics master at an English Public School, but a detailed plot outline would only result in misconception as to the film's essential nature, for the events of the two days serve really as a background against which the character of the central figure unfolds.

The surface picture of Crocker-Harris, Classics master, is sketched with deft strokes through his own behaviour and through the attitudes of those around him: his associates, who dislike him; his wife, who despises him; and his pupils, who regard him as inhuman. As the film progresses, the cold and repelling exterior begins to crumble. Undermined by ill-health, Crocker-Harris' reserve cracks when he encounters the tactless eagerness of the young Classics master who will take his place, and the unexpected warmth of a parting gift from young Taplow, both of which intensify his awareness that he has failed as a teacher. He has failed in his marriage too; at home he is the passive victim of a cruelly contemptuous wife, who delights in boasting to him of her intrigue with one of the masters. Underneath the strict disciplinarian of the classroom, the numb plodding husband, there is exposed an emotionally inhibited being who has suffered deeply from his limitations, and who has imprisoned himself in a circumscribed world of rule and routine with the single-mindedness of those who are at sea in the easy give-and-take of normal relationships.

The situation is disclosed gradually, with an effective crescendo of tension which culminates when Crocker-Harris successfully asserts himself, and is heartened to face a new life alone. But the climax and conclusion are unfortunate lapses into conventional and unconvincing

formula which mar the truth of the portrait. It is true that Crocker-Harris' breakdown during the closing exercises has been carefully foreshadowed in preceding scenes, and that the natural reaction of a group of boys to his broken, impromptu speech would indeed be stunned silence followed by applause. But the implications of the ending are too rosily optimistic to bear with, however realistically the ending itself is treated.

The false ending has its roots in a contradiction in the author's attitude. In the early part of the film, Rattigan has suggested an interaction of the personalities of husband and wife stemming from basic temperamental differences, in which case the responsibility is shared by both. And though his wife, in blind resentment, blames everything on him and nothing on herself, one of Crocker-Harris' sympathetic qualities is that he recognises his share of the failure. Under these circumstances, a self-assertion, a separation, are still quite probable; but they could only be temporary eruptions unaccompanied by a sense of finality, for they would leave Crocker-Harris with the same personal difficulties he had always had. However, the optimistic conclusion as it stands makes the wife fully responsible for the situation and implies that, freed from her, Crocker-Harris will respond differently. The author is therefore shifting his position to identify himself with the remark of the lover, who says, "She's out to kill you"; whereas Crocker-Harris' reply, "You cannot kill what is already dead" is a little nearer the truth. It seems to me that Rattigan missed a chance for a truer climax in the ironical scene where Crocker-Harris rejects the proffered advice of his wife's lover with the reply that the situation, after all, is not an uncommon one; that the discontented wife and henpecked husband are to be found everywhere — usually a subject for farce.

The camera work in the film is unobtrusively polished. A smooth and effective introduction of the schoolboys hurrying across the quadrangle to chapel, the first crowd thinning out to the final stragglers, leads in a deceptively casual manner to our first glimpse of Crocker-Harris' impassive profile. As the film proceeds, the camera, without unnecessary deviation or sentimental underscoring, effortlessly extracts the flavour of the school background. Most important of all, full use is made of the dramatic possibilities of rooms and their occupants viewed from various angles, so that the camera contributes directly to the emotional impact of the sequences. As is seldom the case in a film adapted from a play, the eye here is full partner to the ear.

Another satisfaction of *The Browning Version* is its compact

and economical structure. In contrast with the loose, naturalistic technique which is employed so persistently these days that one wonders if writers and directors are aware of any other treatment, *The Browning Version* builds steadily to its emotional climax through carefully interwoven incident. Yet with all the sense of patterned arrangement, the nice proportion of circumstance, coincidence, and suitable character reaction produces an effect of complete naturalness.

The lesser characters, except for the part of the wife, which is superficially conceived and badly overacted by Jean Kent, are adequately played. Young Taplow, the boy who gives Crocker-Harris a copy of *The Browning Version* is another instance of the exceptional handling of young people by English film-makers in recent years.

But the real impact of the film is made by Michael Redgrave's remarkable portrayal of Crocker-Harris. Redgrave himself has obviously contributed considerably to the full rounding out of the character. He performs with subtlety, with deep understanding — but this is no actor's mask, however skilfully worn. What Redgrave has done in his handling of the role is to give life to the portrait. The life-giving quality is, of course, indefinable; any attempt to isolate it by dissection of style leaves only empty air. The effect is simply that Crocker-Harris is alive, Michael Redgrave does not exist. Consequently to praise his acting as a conscious and deliberate craft seems misleading. And this is in itself the highest possible praise for his art.

As with a favourite book, *The Browning Version* can be referred to again and again with increasing satisfaction.

LOUIS DUDEK

Three Poems

PUERTO RICAN SIDE-STREET

Morning came at me like a flung snowball,
the light flaked out of a chalk-blue sky ;
and I was walking down the dilapidated side-street
like a grasshopper in a field, just born ;
all the rails and pails glistened and deceived me
with bunches of blue flowers and with silk of corn.

The yellow shades were mostly down, some up, some torn ;
and I went looking into windows, into rooms,
looking for the breakfasters, and the cluttered dressers
and cracked walls; watching the black doorways and the dim
charred halls, for the baby carriages and the kids ;
and as I walked, they came, like shots in a foreign film.

And then, in a blue window, lifted like a cross,
her legs straight, hair flat, and arms strung wide,
gazing out at the daylight out of coal-black
glassy eyes, I saw the twelve-year child — a saint
upon a stained-glass window — with her blue sash dress
hanging on her, thinly, and her small face thin and faint.

As I passed looking at her eyes held far away,
she almost turned; but the sun suddenly came
from behind some chimney stack, and I went ahead :
the street blazed up again. The morning hour
had made the ashes shine and the stones burst out in flame,
but it had shown me in her face the sad, dark human flower.

LINE AND FORM

The great orchestrating principle of gravity
makes such music of mountains
as shaped by the mathematical hands
of four winds, clouds
yield in excellent and experimental sculpture;

mushrooms, elephants
and women's legs, have too their form
generated within a three-dimensional space
efficiently.

And so the emotions
combine into exquisite
counterparts of the mind and body
when the moving principle and the natural limits imposed
work against each other,
give in, and resist.

The form is then the single body
of love that two wrestlers make.
But has each one his own?
or is one?
What essential form has
a wind or the sky
that cutting into each other
they mimic living arms?

Eternal forms.
The single power, working alone
rounds out a parabola
that flies into the infinite;
but the deflected particle
out of that line, will fetch a frisk
of sixes and eights
before it vanishes:

an ocean arrested
by sudden solid

ripples out in the sand.
So this world of forms, having no scope for eternity,
is created
in the limitation of what would be complete and perfect,
achieving virtue only
by the justness of its compromises.

THE BIRD

Like the bird in the mind of Paul Klee's cat
This bird will live in my mind, with blood
On his small throat and a white nail in his eye,
For he has shown how quietly a bird can die.

I assume he died. This is the perch where he sat,
His water here, his midday meal; but he is not.
Because he went so quietly in the jaw of a cat,
He will live like Klee's bird in a tree of thought.

For love. To be called to love is no pleasure.
I will have no pleasure remembering this bird.
The pleasure I had, I had; so had the third,

The cat; and some no doubt was reserved, in measure,
For the bird. The rest is only an abstract stir,
Neither suffering nor having joy, in my thought of fur.

Our Neighbours the Nuns

Hugh Garner

When we were youngsters my family lived for a time in Quebec City, where my father had been posted by his company. Our house was a high brown stone affair, flush to the sidewalk, on one of the short curving streets that wind within the walls of the Old City. Next door to us was a small obscure convent hiding from the narrow street behind its catholo-rococo façade. Our backyard was adjacent to the yard of the convent, although separated from it by a high board fence. Despite the proximity of our cloistered neighbors it seemed to me then that they were part of another century, which to all outside intents and purposes they were.

The only sight of them at first was afforded by infrequent glimpses stolen through the cracks in the fence boards. During the summer one or two of the older nuns would venture out on their handkerchief-sized lawn and cut the grass with the aid of much back-breaking labor and a pair of kitchen scissors. In the winter some of them must have shovelled the snow from in front of the main doorway, for I have lain in my warm bed in the dark and heard the quick nervous scrape of snowshovels on the stone-flagged walk.

My sister Edna and I would lie on our bellies in the narrow flower border on our side of the fence during the warm weather and watch the little nuns slowly circling their yard, rosaries clutched in their small pale hands, their lips fluttering over their prayers. The leading pair were always two very old Sisters, one of them with a plump kind face above her mustache, the other with a visage like a dried-up quince.

For Protestant children like ourselves, they had a mystery about them that inspired us to pester our parents with questions as to their mode of life, and their reasons for living as they did. My father told us they belonged to an order which forbade them to beg or purchase the necessities of life, and so were forced to exist on the donations

of people in the parish, who left small parcels of food for them at their door.

It seemed a queer way to live, and we speculated as to their diet, whether at times they existed on bread and potatoes, or if, during the summer, they ate a surfeit of cheap and easy-to-obtain tomatoes and other seasonal foods.

One afternoon, when we had been living there about three months, we were playing catch, and my little brother Tommy threw the ball over the fence into the convent yard. Edna ran into the house and told my mother, who came out to see what she could do. We watched her fearfully, for losing the ball next door was much the same to us as having it roll, irrevocably, over the edge of the earth.

My mother leaned against the fence, her face pressed to a crack, trying to locate the ball. Suddenly she stepped back quickly, as a person does when discovered in an overt act, and stood in the middle of the yard, staring into the air.

As we watched, fascinated, the ball came sailing over in a high arc and rolled along the grass. *"Merci!"* my mother shouted, making the unfamiliar French word sound something akin to a prayer. And wonder of wonders, we heard an answering laugh. This almost ephemeral bit of human conduct changed my whole outlook towards our neighbors, so that for the first time I realized that the short black figures of the nuns were women of flesh and blood.

Our next contact with them was made by Edna one day. While peering through the fence she mustered up her courage and shouted a greeting as a Sister was passing by. She came running into the house with the news that the nun had answered her. When we asked what she had said, Edna replied, "Well, she didn't *say* anything exactly, but she smiled at me." We regarded this as being the thin edge of the wedge which would soon break down the differences between us, but though we shouted, "Hello!" at every opportunity, our friendly overtures remained unanswered.

It was maddening. We were too young to realize what lay behind their apparent lack of friendliness, but I was determined to get their attention. I threw myself into scores of ill-executed cartwheels and somersaults before their unseeing gaze. The opportunity to do this resulted from a provident happening.

One summer morning we awoke to find that a violent storm of the night before had blown down one of the fence boards, leaving a gap of six or seven inches through which we had an uninterrupted

view of the convent garden. My mother forbade us to go near the hole, but by standing in the middle of the yard we could see all that went on next door. We stayed outside most of the day, expecting the nuns to mend the fence as soon as they were aware of its condition, but they took their morning walk without paying any attention to their loss of privacy. In the evening their conduct was repeated.

After dinner my father said, "They'll fix it during the night, after we are asleep," and I lay awake for long hours listening for the sound of hammering which would herald the boarding up of our providential window. In the morning I rushed downstairs and looked through the kitchen door, but saw that nothing had been changed. The hole remained, and the board still lay on the ground where it had fallen.

Each morning I awoke expecting to see the fence repaired, but I was always strangely glad to realize, upon going outside, that it was not. Through our unabashed peeping we had learned some of the outdoor regimen of our neighbors. They appeared as a group around nine in the morning and walked to and fro along the path skirting their building for about half an hour. This was repeated again during the late afternoon. Occasionally two or three of them would emerge at odd times during the day, and if the weather was warm they would rest on the grass. There they would sit in silent meditation, their eyes held away from the sight of the uncloistered world which the fence hole afforded. We gave our own childish names to some of them, The Quince, Mother Mustache, and there was one quick little Sister whom we called, for some reason that escapes me now, Miss Daw.

One freezing night we were awakened by the sounds of fire apparatus outside. We children hurried into our parent's room, which was in front of the house, and pushed with them against the window to see what was going on below.

A crowd was gathering along the narrow sidewalk across the street, as cheerfully noisy and undisciplined as only a Gallic crowd can be. Two or three fur-hatted policemen tried in vain to stem their slow advance. They were pointing in the direction of the convent, and upon my father's hurried opening of the window we could see the heavy smoke rolling up in greasy spirals from between the gaping shutters of the building's upper floor.

As we watched we saw the short black figures of the nuns emerging from the main door of the convent and taking up positions

in the narrow front yard, where they were partly hidden from the street by the protecting height of a wrought-iron fence.

Although it took the firemen almost an hour to put out the blaze, the shivering figures inside the fence did not move from their position, but stood huddled together in the below-zero weather. They suffered the cold quietly, seemingly more ill-at-ease at their exposure to the eyes of those around them than anything else.

When the danger was past they went inside again, and the shutters were drawn between them and the outside world. The two things that impressed me most that night were their impassiveness and the lack of curtains blowing from the opened windows. The first of these aroused in me an admiration for their stoicism, while the second made me sad, as if the lack of curtains was symbolic of their lives.

In September of the following year I was sent away to school in Toronto, where I scarcely ever gave the nuns a thought, surrounded as I was with the new exciting life there, among boys to whom such a thing as a convent was as foreign as a Tibetan lama.

Upon arriving home for the Christmas holidays I was told by my family that our neighbors the nuns were showing signs of illness. There was rife speculation between my father and mother as to what was causing it.

My father, an Englishman of the beef-eater school, believed that it was a lack of meaty proteins in their diet. We decided that as a neighborly gesture, and to prove his contention, we would make up a basket containing a Christmas fowl and trimmings and place it inside the fence hole, where they could get it first thing Christmas morning.

My mother made up the offering, roasting a turkey, and placing it, along with plum pudding, cake and cranberry sauce, in a large eleven-quart fruit basket. Late that evening we crowded around the kitchen door and watched my father slip it into the convent yard. We had wrapped everything in heavy paper, and had covered the basket with a piece of linoleum well tied on with string to keep any prowling cats away. Over the whole we had fastened some gay red Christmas paper so that it would contrast with the snow, and they would be sure to see it.

Awakening next morning it was difficult to tell which of the two attractions, the presents-strewn tree or the nuns' basket of food, would beckon us first. Edna ran out into the yard and came back in a minute to report, breathlessly, that the basket had been taken in.

Looking back it seems that our Christmas was made doubly enjoyable by the knowledge that for one meal at least the little Sisters next door would fare almost as well as we would.

Two days later my mother came in from the yard after breakfast carrying the basket in which we had sent the food to the nuns. She placed it on the table and we crowded around to see what was inside. On top was the linoleum cover, and underneath it the heavy paper, neatly folded, in which the food had been wrapped. She lifted this and we saw that lying in a row at the bottom of the basket were three little plaster angels, their hand-painted faces gazing up at us as though in supplication.

Edna said, "Oh, Mama, there's one each for Tommy, Eric and me!"

My mother picked them up gently and handed them around, cautioning us not to let them fall and break. I took mine in my hand and turned it over as though it were some sort of voodoo charm. "These are funny-looking dolls," I said. " You can buy better ones at the five-and-ten."

"You give that back to me!" my mother shouted, taking the doll away. "You don't deserve this. They gave you these because they were all they had to give." She took the doll upstairs. It was then I learned that an unexpected present is a gift from God.

We watched the nuns for the next few days, hoping to see some improvement in their condition, but they walked around as listlessly as before, my father's theory seemingly disproved by their actions.

"They need something, poor devils!" my mother insisted. "If we only knew what it was!"

"Why doesn't somebody ask them?" I said.

"No, we can't do that."

"Mr. Gregoire next door might know. He's French and a Catholic. Maybe they'll tell him."

When my father came home that evening my mother sent him to our other next door neighbor, Mr. Gregoire. He came back shortly and said that the Gregoires had also been wondering if the nuns were short of something necessary to their health, but like us they had been unable to find out what it was.

The discovery of the missing article of diet was relatively simple, but was due to a quite fortuitous accident. During the week following Christmas I leafed through the books I had received as presents. The one that fascinated me most was *Robinson Crusoe*, and I

began reading it avidly. Studying his preparations for life on the lonely island I found out that among the things he could not do without was the common mineral salt.

I hurried to my mother with my discovery.

"That's it!" she exclaimed. "Why didn't we think of it before!"

She could not wait for the cover of darkness before going out into the yard to place a five cent bag of table salt inside the hole in the fence. When the nuns came out for their evening walk one of them broke ranks, picked up the bag, and ran with it through a door in the convent.

Early next morning one of the Sisters — I believe it was the Quince — came to our door and thanked my mother for her thoughtfulness, both for the Christmas dinner and the small bag of salt. She said, in broken English, that their thanks to *Les Anglais* was profound and overwhelming, especially when they knew we were not of their faith.

During the winter my sister Edna kept me informed by mail of the developments next door. I learned that much friendly progress had been made, and that a heart-warming friendship had sprung up between Miss Daw and my three-year-old brother Tommy. Edna had learned the names of some of the nuns, and her letters were filled with bewildering references to Sister Mathilde, Sister Marie-Jesus, Sister Conception and others.

The break in our friendship with the nuns was caused, as most breaks between friends are, by the intrusion of an outsider.

We had an early Easter that year, and when I arrived home from school for the holidays I found that the city was covered with a new fall of snow. More snow fell on Good Friday night, and we went to bed listening to the muffled tread of the *Quebecois* as they made their way to and from Confession along the carpeted street.

I was awakened in the morning by the sound of many voices coming from the direction of our yard. I dressed hurriedly and made my way downstairs to the kitchen. Outside, my mother was gesticulating frantically with the Quince and Mother Mustache, who were standing on their side of the break in the fence surrounded by what appeared to be the whole convent personnel. The two old nuns were engaged in a bitter conversation, now and again pointing to the snow-covered ground. I glanced at where they were pointing and saw the imprint of a pair of shoes making a double ellipsis across the yard, from the alley between our house and the Gregoire's, to the convent fence.

My mother refused to answer our questions during the morning, but when my father came home at noon she told him, almost tearfully, that someone had entered the convent grounds by way of the hole in the fence the night before, and that the Sister Superior had taken the attitude that it was our fault.

"Was the convent broken into?"

"No."

"They can't blame us," my father soothed her. "How can it be our fault? The fence is theirs."

I accompanied my father into the yard during the afternoon, and we saw that a second board had been sprung from its footing, making a space wide enough for a person to squeeze through. We traced the foot-prints across the yard and down the alley until they merged with the trampled snow of the sidewalk.

Early in the evening the nuns repaired the fence, placing the boards back and nailing them into place. Edna and I watched them from the kitchen window.

"I'll bet Miss Daw will be sorry in the spring, when she can't see Tommy playing," Edna said.

I agreed.

We had no further contact with them. The nailing up of the fence wrote *finis* to something that soon became but an incident in our lives. But through our brief friendship with our neighbors we had gained some understanding of them, and perhaps they had learned to understand us a bit better also.

During the following summer my father was recalled to the head office of his company in Toronto, and we moved away, leaving the little nuns behind.

While in Quebec City last year I took a walk down the small street we had lived on so many years ago. My mother and father are dead now. My sister Edna is a middle-aged woman with a large family of her own, and Tommy is buried in Holland.

As I drew abreast of the small convent, a short black-clad figure came through the door and made her way slowly down the steps to the street. When she turned in my direction I glanced at her face beneath her coif, and I was certain she was the little nun we had known as Miss Daw.

But perhaps I was mistaken. Everything in the world has changed or gone, and nostalgia can create pictures in the minds of those who still grow old.

Painting

Andrew Bell

ART AT THE TORONTO FAIR

What is happening to-day in our contemporary art? Inevitably it has been difficult for the layman to come by an adequate answer, for the good reason that the various annual Canadian exhibitions are normally sponsored by one or other of the painting societies and so depict only the kind of work, which fits their particular aesthetic predilections. Either the exhibitions will be academic or experimental or unhappily even race may intervene. Because so far a majority of the more talented French Canadians tend to prefer separate showings. The valuable display of pictures and sculptures at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto this autumn could scarcely be called a definitive statement. Sufficient diversity of selection existed, however, to warrant some useful conclusions.

Now the C.N.E., which has long boasted that it is the largest annual show of its kind on earth, is understandably a circus with innumerable rings. And an art exhibition, over a period of seventy odd years, has always made up one of these rings. But since the C.N.E. is a national show-window with every sort of person looking in, choice of works of art had obviously to take into account the likings of a huge number of people. There would be no sufficient point in a ring which drew only the eyes of a highbrow few.

Formerly, in short, these C.N.E. art shows have aimed to offer every palate a tempting dish, with contributions of incredible variety coming from almost anywhere. Canadian artists have naturally been included, but there has never been an exclusive all-Canadian Exhibition. That is until this year: this Fall (with the exception of the serene and lovely Whistler portraits of his Mother and of Thomas Carlyle in private niches of their own) the complete five-gallery building was given over to examples of contemporary Canadian work. And unlike those annual society sponsored rendez-vous, each of which has a special artistic god and its separate congregation of worshippers, pretty nearly every current mode of Canadian painting was included. Some omissions there were of course, as well as a spattering of totally inconsequential works (which the public might have been spared) and a disappointing

number of others unworthy of their gifted creators.

These strictures notwothstanding, this Exhibition nonetheless provides the best answer so far to my opening query. And it is against this background, what is happening in all manner of Canadian art, that I shall essay some impressions of the Show. Or, put otherwise, to what extent and with what penetration and breadth of feeling, does our art express our particular mental and physical world?

During the nineteenth century beauty and art were largely thought to be synonomous. The calling of pictures was evocation of beautiful subjects, and examples were of consequence to the degree they mirrored pleasurable thoughts. In our time artists conceive rather their function to be truthful talk about any facet of human life — large parts of which are of course singularly 'unbeautiful'. Then also many expositors contend that the essence of a subject may be more effectively revealed by extensive stylization or symbolism than through a rigid adherence to surface appearances. And so current work is a creature of two heads; one academic, the heir of the nineteenth century philosophy; the other experimental, an outgrowth of newer artistic attitudes. People who like the one tend to scoff at the other. The C.N.E. Selection Committee, anxious to maintain an even-handed justice, devised the novel concept of separate juries for the respective schools. The statement of an aesthetic case was not their concern. Their objective was simply an equal opportunity for all manner of expression and a generalized appeal. Both aims, I think, were well met.

Let me attempt a relationship of these ideas to specific contributions. That first indigenous Canadian art movement, the Group of Seven, preoccupied itself in the main with the heroics of our vast, unpeopled country. And even to-day this interest in the *face* of Canada persists; an approximate half of the pictures were landscapes. But now this interest comes out in a variety of styles, with the stress rather more upon the physical world at our doorstep, and less with the anatomical individuality of our particular half continent. There was, for example, an admirable David Milne 'Church, Tree and House', which suggests a familiar grouping redolent with association for almost any Canadian. Similarly, Stanley Cosgrove's 'Landscape', trees cut by a broad swath of path, is clever evocation of a scene we all know. Luke Lindoe, John Little, Sydney Watson; they also deal, in highly effective painting, with our out-of-doors. But man now lives in these

pictures; there are dwellings and roads and motorcars linking us together. The Group of Seven were pioneers in the truest sense; a collective vision and shared feeling for the drama of Canada gave a unique unity to their canvasses. It is so no longer with our landscapes. In the C.N.E. landscapes there is a wide disparity of treatment, and almost no-one any more is self-consciously proclaiming 'this is Canada'. That is an important step ahead. Painters, free of the compulsion to describe how Canada is, can focus their interest on more subtle and universal truths. In the realm of our environment Canadian artists, irrespective of race or school, speak out effectively the things we are and are not. The only weakness is the quiet of their voice: their pictures should somehow manage to capture something larger than just a row of houses or a lonely prairie road.

Twenty-five years ago there was an almost absolute absence of indigenous 'still-lifes'. What there were had such a derivative European quality as to be valueless. Canadian artists to-day paint whatever subject appeals to them and very often this is a grouping of specific objects. We see the value now of 'fixing' for the future these glimpses of a special beauty or truth. It is so, for instance, with the Bruno Bobak 'Weeds and Firs', the Bertram Brooker 'Driftwood', the Agnes Lefort 'Nature — Morte au Violon' and the Martha Rakine 'Still Life'. Inanimate objects no more hold any inhibition. Canadians are technically able, and paint them as they wish.

Then we are fully willing to be verbal in the abstract; aesthetic equations as so many are where the spectator must study and add up the parts if he would an answer. It is thus alike with established painters and comparative newcomers. There were, as an example, two enormously competent Lawren Harris non-representative works; extraordinary essays about his mystical cosmos of time and space. The average onlooker came away perplexed but intrigued; next time he will probably probe deeper. 'Floraison Massive' by Paul-Emile Borduas, 'Little Village by the Sea' of F. Brandtner, 'Concerning a Frog' by R. L. Bloore and 'Variations on a Theme, No. 2' of Marion Scott are similar instances. All of them are in non-literal language; none yield up their secrets without considerable mental and emotional effort. Yet here is the significant consideration. These artists are painting as they will, and even under international standards their work would, I suspect, measure up. Abstraction, whatever one's reservations, is a fact of contemporary art. And Canadian painters, like others perplexed with how to explain the compexity of our period, are hoping that

perhaps these symbols of theirs may provide some answers.

It is when we come to humanity that our art falls short. Portraits, which are preponderantly coloured photographs, are scarcely 'art vivant'. There were several such pictures in the C.N.E. Show and most of them failed, not because they were pretty literal; rather an inability to grasp the spirit of the subject was the cause. In this category, however, there was one notable 'surprise'. My preference is for the stylized approach in modern art, and most of the 'academic' works left me unmoved. Many of them appeared so incorrigibly life-less. How little they would convey to other peoples and succeeding generations! But certainly it was not thus with the meticulously precise Kenneth Forbes study of a prosperous family-mother, four children, dogs and toys against the background of a lush departmental store-furnished living room. This picture crackled with verities about a side of contemporary Canadian society.

What about other representations of people, especially in relation to their environment — in other words the crucial social comment, which is properly considered the apex of art? Jack Nichols is concerned with man, and his way of seeing is compassionate and strong. His 'Girl with Basin' is charming fantasy and his 'Knockout' smells of boxers and the canvas-covered ring. But he still needs to relate these isolated impressions to a broader statement. It is similarly so with the Walter R. Hickling 'Presences', a competent study of male ballet dancers. The Jacques de Tonnancour 'The Pink Necklace' is a finely organized study of a young woman, rather in the mood of the School of Paris. That aesthetic influence is unimportant. Criticism rests on other grounds. This picture enlarges almost not at all my understanding of that girl or Canadian womanhood. One of the best contributions to social comment in fact has no face; only bodies in motion. This is the Jack H. Bush 'The Pass', a clever, stylized depiction of football players. Sport is a facet of our living, and this impression comes across exceedingly well. 'Couple', a proletarian study by Ghitta Caiserman succeeds rather for the same reason. The despondent mood of these young people is authentic and revealing. All of these isolated cases, however, lift only a small portion of the curtain which shrouds how we live, and the ways we are.

Some aspects of this Exhibition escape a particular heading. Lake Huron Poem' by Eric Aldwinkle comes in this class. This artist does little 'serious' painting, and that is a pity. In this work he vests a portion of the Canadian land with a spiritualized quality, which

excepting David Milne escapes nearly all our other painters. It is so, though the subject is completely different, with the Yvonne McKague Houser 'Sleep Walker', a mystical study of a feminine form in relation to space. The contributions of Grant Macdonald 'A Story' and 'Black Flower' likewise are rendered with a singular individuality; respectively suggestive portrayals of two boys and a young girl. Macdonald has an original gift and a highly honest sensitivity. That is the case also with C. Bettina Somers' 'Dead Flicker in Forest'. Harold Town is worth watching. His monochromatic 'Don Quixote, Rocinante and Sancho Panza' has an extraordinary dimensional quality. The subject may seem inconsequential in an age of atomic threat. His capacity to paint through and beyond, however, holds an infinitely welcome promise.

Sculpture is the weak sister of the Canadian arts, partly because it is so expensive in Canada to cast into permanent material. The contributions numbered only fourteen: two alone within this compass deserve comment. The Louis Archambault 'Head', a stylized essay about a moose, is witty and sure. 'But Lot's Wife Turned Back and She Became a Pillar of Salt' by Dora Wechsler was a ceramic: an unassuming statuette admittedly, yet nonetheless eloquent and powerful.

How can one telescope these impressions into a concensus about the state of contemporary Canadian painting? Artists such as Alfred Pellan, Jack Humphreys, Miller Brittain, Peter Aspell, Roloff Beny, Charles Comfort, Isabel McLaughlin, Will Ogilvie, Jori Smith and Sylvia D'Aoust moreover, are not represented. Only a handful of conclusions are possible. Technically our painters have an abundance, whatever their aesthetic philosophy, of equipment. The thrall of the Canadian land has given way to a wider curiosity. They remain chary about talk of their brother. But the sparks are patently there. Painters in Canada, in brief, appear on the way to more disinterested, less parochial, forms of expression.

BOOKS

WORLD WITHIN WORLD. The Autobiography of Stephen Spender. British Book Service, Toronto. 349 pages. $3.25.

Spender's title refers to the private world of the poet's sensibility and the public world of social and political activity. His generation — the English writers of the thirties who have sometimes been called the Auden-Isherwood group — was, he believes, especially conscious of the conflicting claims of the two worlds. They were all members of "the Divided Generation"; their "gravest weakness . . . was that they were time-bound".

Aside from its specific meaning, Spender's title also suggests a fitting atmosphere of claustrophobia. For he seems early to have sensed how remorselessly the public world was closing in, not only on the upper-middle-class to which his family belonged, but on the sensitive individual as well. His father and uncle, grown sedate in the traditions of British Liberalism, merely succeeded in convincing him that their day was ended, and so, as he mourns on the second page of *World Within World,* "When I was taught about the past, I often regretted that there were no great causes left to fight for . . ." And in early poems like "What I expected", he contrasted the life he had been led to expect with his own vision of how sombre and stifling the future was going to be.

Later, when he found a cause which seemed worth fighting for, Spender's background made it difficult for him to participate easily in the struggle. For, as he wrote in another early poem, "My parents kept me from children who were rough . . ." So *World Within World* forms in part a chronicle of Spender's efforts to make connections outside his own class and country. And as the attempts prove abortive, "guilt" becomes the dominant and recurrent emotion with which he is left stranded; until finally, accepted by men outside his class during a wartime period in the Fire Service, he briefly reflects in his autobiography a feeling ease and an openness to humour which are for the most part lacking elsewhere.

There was one other occasion when the world opened up for a moment: in Germany during the last days of the Weimar Republic. And there Spender and Isherwood suddenly found themselves free to seek out the "children who were rough". But the triumph of the Nazis, the defeat of the Vienna workers and the Spanish Civil War

followed, and in a Europe shadowed with Fascism and threats of war, they were soon bound to the wheel of time again. It was then that many of the Divided Generation began their flirtation with Communism.

The subject of *World Within World* is even more politics than literature, and Spain forms a kind of watershed in Spender's career. And when he writes about the Spanish Civil War, his very political naivete serves to underline the tragic manoeuvres and betrayals which eventually perverted the Republican cause. Spain brought about Spender's disillusionment with Communism, but unlike Auden and Isherwood, he did not turn from politics to religion (though he admits in this book to "a longing for eternity" and a preoccupation with "the idea of judgment"). Nor does he now feed on his own past with any of the lurid self-satisfaction of, say, Arthur Koestler.

Spender's political history is, then, not distasteful; neither is it a very brilliant record. He includes a revealing description of an early meeting with T. S. Eliot, at which he asked Eliot's views of the future. Eliot replied that "politically he thought there was no future 'except . . . internecine conflict'. I asked him what exactly he meant by this, and he said: 'People killing one another in the streets.' This marked a difference in our attitudes . . ." It marked, of course, far more than a mere difference in attitudes. There is still a good deal of confused and even empty rhetoric in Spender's politics: he has been closer all his life to his father and uncle than he perhaps even now realizes.

All the same *World Within World* is an important book, and the act of reading it is a moving, sometimes a quite harrowing, experience. It shows more sense of perspective than some of Spender's other writing would have led me to expect, and it reveals a good deal about the literary and political atmosphere of England and the continent during the thirties. For the most part, however, the sketches of individual writers are less interesting and complete. And while Spender evidently determined to write with absolute frankness about his private life, his stubborn and tormented exercise in self-analysis seems to me to attempt more than it achieves. Spender has never been an easy prose stylist, and those pages of his autobiography which are most subjective are also those pages which are most heavily clouded with long, awkward and abstract sentences.

While they were still at Oxford, Auden urged Spender to write

autobiography. Presumably he couldn't have guessed at that time that Spender was in many ways cut out to be a *representative* figure; that of all the writers of their generation, he would be the one most desperately and passionately committed to both their divergent worlds. But in any case, it is particularly in the degree to which Spender represented their time that *World Within World* becomes such a sad and even powerful experience to read.

Robert L. Weaver.

COUNTERPOINT TO SLEEP — Anne Wilkinson. New Writers' Series No. 8, First Statement Press, Montreal. 36 pages. $1.00.

This is the first book of poems by a promising writer, whose technical skill and quick imagination are her best qualities.

The style is marked by wit and vivid imagery. It is sometimes reminiscent of Dylan Thomas in both rhythm and language. For instance:

> For all I know they lie there yet
> On the home sweet hearth of hell.

and

> All the aftermath of the hay-high morning,

and this (about a white orchid):

> . . . it boasts of snow
> Although its tongue has licked the blood of swans.

The drawbacks of this type of writing are a kind of verbal indigestion, and the danger that if a daring metaphor falls flat its failure may be far more devastating than that of a less ambitious image. Mrs. Wilkinson avoids both difficulties most of the time. She has a sense of form, and some of the shorter poems display the ease, unity and metrical skill of the good traditional lyric. A few are as simple as nursery rhymes.

One of those qualities which belong both to the writer's attitude and to her method is a certain type of ironic playfulness. Puns like "The whine of autumn in the family tree" are an essential part of her style; a tendency to mock at her own emotional experiences is equally important in the general tone of the poems. The irony is probably intended as a safeguard against sentimentality. At its best it is effective; at its worst it degenerates into bravado or coyness

and sets one's teeth on edge.

Mrs. Wilkinson has two or three favorite themes which recur in several poems, and appear as subsidiary metaphors in others. This means that an extensive reading of her work can increase one's appreciation of individual poems; it also makes the work more interesting as a whole, because the total effect is distinctive and coherent.

None of these themes is particularly original in itself. The first was stated by Traherne (starting from very different premises) thus: "You never enjoy the world aright, until the Sea itself floweth in your veins; till you are clothed with the Heavens and crowned with the stars." Mrs. Wilkinson is keenly aware of both stars and sea, and has intuitive memories of her relation to them, as in *The Great Winds.* The sea assumes for her the traditional Freudian significance, with strong emphasis on its evolutionary basis. There is an odd resemblance to E. J. Pratt in her use of sea-imagery. The world does not end at her finger-tips:

> My skin is the leaf of the willow,
> My nerves are the roots of the weeping willow tree,

and her blood is confluent with the sap of trees, and subject to their seasons. Hence a close identification, which seems more than metaphorical, between human life and nature (*Climate of the Brain*); a symbolism which equates Easter with the pagan spring festivals; an emphasis on the cycle of death and rebirth in a purely physical sense; an indebtedness to "The Golden Bough" differing from Eliot's, because Mrs. Wilkinson sees the human resurrection as a renewal of energy and affirmation within the individual life.

The brittle vitality and sensuous joy are counterbalanced by the threat of a permanent winter, whose dangers must be strenuously resisted. Here is the clear (and rather bald) statement:

> Two conditions of man are fixed :
> The quick and the dead.
> Beware the drowsy twilight bait
> That lures a man from home
> And traps him, traitor
> In a strangers' camp.
> Throw in your widow's mite,
> Defend the quick,
> Their victory is here and now
> And will not shrink
> Though they concede the ultimate defeat.

With themes like these, and a richly metaphorical style, it is strange that the strongest impression left by Mrs. Wilkinson's poetry is one of sophistication and wit. Her irony has an importance out of all proportion to the length of the passages in which it is clearly apparent. Its presence is the only indication (an indirect one) that Mrs. Wilkinson has not entirely escaped the Canadian Nemesis — an ingrown Puritanism. She is not quite at home in the role of Mrs. Bloom the Moon Goddess, but it suits her better than most of us.

In this country it is still worth comment when one finds a poet capable of handling a relatively modern idiom like a professional, rather than an industrious student. Mrs. Wilkinson can do this. It is encouraging, too, to observe that her later poems are better than her earlier ones, and that her next book will not lack material. The old problem of "cosmopolitan standards", which gives some of our critics so much trouble, forces me to say that Mrs. Wilkinson's work would probably be considered of minor importance outside Canada. It is, however, fresh, competent and pleasant to read by any standard; and it is considerably better than a great deal of Canadian work which has been very highly praised by patriotic reviewers.

Audrey Aikman.

SELECTED POEMS OF DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT, with a memoir by E. K. Brown. Ryerson Press, 176 pages. $3.50.

The poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott has enjoyed esteem rather than enthusiasm, and has never attracted a very wide public, though keenly appreciated by those to whom it did appeal. It has a characteristically subdued and muted quality, most effective when it is most melancholy, remote, and dream-like, esssentially a poetry of frustration. This character appears even in the narratives, both in prose and in verse, whose theme is most often violent, and even terrible, but whose action turns regularly on frustration. It seems likely too that the longing for rest which so markedly pervades the lyrics is the outcome rather of inner tension than of outer fatigue; yet the tension itself rarely gets directly into his verse. In keeping with this general colouring, his poetic language is at once fluent and inarticulate, feeling for a meaning that in spite of copious vocabulary and thought-

ful care is never quite expressed. Details are handled with delicate appreciation, but the whole poem commonly has a shimmering indeterminate effect. So he is happiest in unequal lines irregularly rhymed; a regular scheme tends to tie language and thought in rather pat and obvious phrasing. One might have expected him to be an impressionist, but apparently the influence of early reading was too strong; here too it is surprising that Coleridge seems to have played so small a part in his literary formation.

The restraint which brings some of his poetry to the prosaic is not always a disadvantage, particularly in the prose stories which are perhaps his best work; much of their grimness is brought out by the studied mildness of the expression. In the poetry, however, one has too often the feeling that moderation and reticence become inhibition. Even a dramatic and decisive act is seen through a misty, wavering, indeterminate atmosphere where dream and reality interpenetrate. In practical affairs he was business-like and prudent, but when he wrote, reflection was less strong than intuitions that never quite received embodiment in expression. The *Piper of Arll* is prophetic, with its picture of the poet whose inspiration takes him very literally out of his depth, and immobilises him in the muteness of a dream.

It is significant that when Scott wants to pick out a single dominant quality to characterize one "thick with faults", he calls him " a boaster". A great deal of his best work is unusually impersonal, even where his own experience is involved. He spent much less time and attention on the cultivation and admiration of personal attitudes than is common among Canadian poets of his, or our time. This seems to have been his deliberate choice. From all accounts of his nature it seems clear that he had brought himself to terms with the world, and achieved a measure of contentment, even of enjoyment. Perhaps if his character had been less strong, his poetry might have been more intense — a doubtful gain for him.

E. K. Brown, in a concise and informative memoir prefixed to this collection has noted in passing some of the repressions of Scott's earlier years. It is a great misfortune that Brown, who knew Scott much better than any other of the younger critics did, can never work out a full study of the conflicts and their resolutions, or evasions, that produced Scott's verse. References in the Memoir to poems not included in this selection suggest that such a study might have been ultimately intended. What we have is a brief and sympathetic survey of the main features of Scott's life, interspersed with brief passages of

critical appreciation that have not been rounded out to a complete and balanced picture of Scott's poetic development and individuality.

The poetry remains to delight those who can be at home in its precise but shifting dream world, with its clear, pale sights and sounds, and to offer still a challenge of interpretation to the critic who can relate it, both in its success and in its failure, to the author's experience.

L. A. MacKay.

TO OUR READERS

For the second time we are approaching our readers with a request for donations. Last year's appeal met with a very generous response, and we hope you will give us your support again. As you know, the publication of a Canadian literary magazine is in the nature of an act of faith, and the survival of Northern Review depends to an unusual extent on the cooperation of its readers. We *must* obtain our fund objective if the magazine is to continue to appear.

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ANDREW BELL, well-known as a critic of Canadian painting, has appeared frequently in *Canadian Art.*

LOUIS DUDEK, author of *East of the City,* a book of poems, is lecturing this year at McGill University.

CHESTER DUNCAN, our music critic, lectures at the University of Manitoba. He is heard on the CBC programme, *Critically Speaking.*

HUGH GARNER of Toronto is the author of *Cabbage Town* and *Storm Below.*

GEORGE LANNING, a Canadian by birth, is an undergraduate at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio.

L. A. MACKAY, poet and critic, teaches classics at the University of California.

DOROTHY LIVESAY is the author of *Day and Night, Poems For People* and other books of verse.

BELLE POMER, our film critic, who lives in Toronto, has also contributed to *The Canadian Forum.*

ROBERT WEAVER directs the well-known CBC programmes, *Critically Speaking* and *Canadian Short Stories.*

ANNE WILKINSON of Toronto is the author of the recently-published book, *Counterpoint to Sleep.*

THE NORTHERN REVIEW AWARDS

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